

PRIME MINISTER

75/20

Sunday November 23, 1975

Thursday November 27, 1975

ELECTORAL TALK BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND MEMBER FOR WANNON

MR MALCOLM FRASER

Three events of major significance occurred this week. One of them promises great benefits to the neglected Northern Territory and the second will give people of the A.C.T. more say in their own affairs. The third event marked a shocking deterioration in the level of political debate in Australia.

This week the Liberal and National Country Parties set 1980 as the goal for achieving statehood for the Northern Territory.

The Territory made steady progress for almost a quarter of a century under a Liberal National Country Party Government. It prospered and Darwin grew from a city of 8,000 to a city of 48,000.

But for three years now, under Labor, there has been economic stagnation, bureaucratic neglect and muddled planning.

Cyclone Tracy gave the Whitlam Government the chance it was looking for to experiment with long range town planning.

As a result, the city remains unbuilt while bureaucrats squabble over the best way to make a start.

PRIME MINISTER

2.

The Whitlam Administration stopped the people of Darwin from getting on with the job themselves and yet was unable itself to achieve results.

The Coalition Parties have undertaken to start putting into effect the recommendations made by a Committee of the Parliament on transfer of powers to the Territory's own elected Legislative Assembly.

This report has lain neglected by the Whitlam Administration, gathering dust for a year.

That means that the people of the Territory will start running their own Museums, Art Galleries, Housing Commission, Tourist Board and Public Service.

It means they will begin to collect their own taxes and take over such local and regional functions as agriculture, transport, electricity and sewerage services, liquor licensing and gaming laws.

However, we propose to take these recommendations much further and to give the people of the Territory the opportunity to work for statehood within five years.

Following many representations and the report of the Joint Parliament Committee of the A.C.T. it is clearly now appropriate for the people of the A.C.T. to gain through the Legislative Assembly more responsibility for their own financial management and decision making.

PRIME MINISTER

3.

After December 13 we will set up a full time Task Force to examine the ways and means of giving some executive authority to the A.C.T. Legislative Assembly.

There will be a devolution of powers and responsibilities to the residents of the A.C.T. which is in accord with the principles embodied in our Federalism Policy.

Canberra in the A.C.T. is the seat of Government for the nation and the Federal Parliament must always have an interest in many aspects of its affairs.

The other major development this week was the deplorable collapse of political debate in this country to violence.

Protest and demonstration, jostling and egg throwing has been a characteristic of political life in Australia for some years.

But now letters have been received in my Department as Prime Minister, in the Department of the Premier of Queensland, Mr Bjelke-Petersen which contained bombs while a third bomb has been intercepted in mail addressed to the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr.

In my Department the bomb was detected and defused.

In Brisbane the device exploded on a desk, wounding two people, one of them so seriously as to endanger his sight.

PRIME MINISTER

4.

The type of violence by which 50 or 100 people set out to disrupt a meeting is regrettable but that this approach should degenerate into violence and anger is shocking to all Australians.

There is an obligation on political leaders to avoid language which inflames passions.

When political leaders talk of extremism, they will create an extremist response. There is an obligation in the circumstances of today to keep the campaign in moderate and reasonable terms.

The Liberal and National Country Parties have sought to avoid inflammatory rhetoric and we will continue to avoid doing so.

I am sure the overwhelming majority of Australians support me in deploring this shocking development.

This week too, the Liberal and National Country Parties pledged themselves to adopt and implement two reports on the beef industry by the Industries Assistance Commission.

The first of these reports provides for emergency aid to this hard hit industry.

The I.A.C. recommends that the export levy on beef of 1.6 cents per pound be suspended and that special funds be provided for producers worst affected by the fall in meat prices.

.../5

PRIME MINISTER

5.

Their second recommendation is that producers should be compensated when their cattle show positive reactions to tuberculosis and brucellosis eradication tests.

Farmers everywhere have suffered because of the uncertainty which Labor has created during the past three years.

The Whitlam Administration's hard line resources policy has encouraged our trading partners to be just as tough with us.

The successfully cultivated Japanese market for meat has been disrupted and last week the U.S. authorities closed their market to further imports from Australia for the rest of this quota year.

There is much to be done after December 13 to repair the damage which has been wreaked in the past three years.

One step we will take immediately is to initiate Government to Government discussion to resolve past misunderstanding.